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FORAGE NEWS

For more forage information, visit our UK Forage Extension Website at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>

December 2011

Garry D. Lacefield and S. Ray Smith, Extension Forage Specialists • Christi Forsythe, Secretary

HEART OF AMERICA GRAZING CONFERENCE

Livestock producers looking for the latest information on forages, grazing techniques and pasture management have the opportunity to attend the 11th annual Heart of America Grazing Conference on

January 25-26

The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn in Mt Vernon, Illinois. Registration is \$35 per day per person or \$50 for both days. Late registration paid after January 13 is \$70.

The conference is sponsored by Ohio State University Extension, the Ohio Forage and Grassland Council, Illinois Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Association, Illinois Forage and Grassland Council, Indiana Forage Council, Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council, Kentucky Grassland Conservation Initiative, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Missouri Forage and Grassland Council, Missouri Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois Extension, University of Missouri Extension, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Each year the Heart of America Grazing Conference rotates among five states--Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky--and features speakers from all five states concerning a wide variety of grazing topics.

Topics being covered include the benefits of grazing and adding clover to pastures, mob grazing, role of novel fescues, grazing for parasite prevention, use of co-products in grazing programs, dairy grazing, pasture management, and cover crops.

Certified crop advisor credits will be offered.

For more information or to register, download the brochure at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/ajmpu/hoa/>.



U.K. FORAGE VARIETY TESTS

Mr. Gene Olson, our U.K. Forage Variety Test Coordinator has been burning the midnight oil to summarize data from all our grass and legume trials across Kentucky this year. Reports are being added to our website at they come available. Visit

<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/ForageVarietyTrials2.htm> for latest results.

FORAGE DYNAMICS AND CALF BEHAVIOR IN TWO CREEP GRAZING SYSTEMS

Abstract - The main objectives of this study were to evaluate forage availability and nutritive value, and calf movement within two creep grazing systems. The study was initiated in 2008 at the Virginia Tech Shenandoah

Valley Agricultural Research Center at Steeles Tavern, VA. Two creep grazing systems were evaluated: 1) forward creep grazing (FCR) where dams and offspring rotate through a series of paddocks with offspring as first grazers and dams as last grazers, and 2) a dedicated creep grazing (DCR) system where calves have access to a nil-ergot, endophyte-infected fescue + alfalfa pasture at all times while rotating through a series of paddocks with dams. The experiment also has treatments that included grazing by medium or large frame cows and paddocks devoted to winter stockpile grazing. From 2008 to 2010, available forage and nutritive value data showed inconsistent trends

between creep grazing treatments. Grazing of winter stockpile had positive effects on forage availability and nutritive value in subsequent growing seasons. We used GPS collars to track calf movements in creep grazing treatments and found that calves spent more time in DCR pastures (15%) compared with FCR pastures (4%). Greater time in DCR pastures likely reflected higher forage nutritive value during summer months and lower fescue toxicity. The study is still on-going, but our findings thus far suggest a dedicated creep grazing system with improved forage varieties may be the better option for beef producers. In addition, we found that grazing stockpiled tall fescue in winter may improve forage production the subsequent year.

(SOURCE: B.F. Tracy, J.P. Flores, R.M. Lewis, A.E. Tanner, W. Swecker D. Fiske IN 2011 AFGC Proceedings & Abstracts, French Lick, IN, June 13-15)



TESTING AND FEEDING TOBACCO-BROWN HAY AND SILAGE

Now that hay and silage has heated and turned brown. Stay tuned for advice on feeding these forages.

Hay baled too wet or silage chopped to dry can get excessively hot and cause certain chemical reactions to occur. These chemical reactions and the heat that produces them will darken your forage and make it smell sweet like caramel.

Livestock often find such hay or silage very palatable. But, the chemical reaction that caused this heat-damaged forage also makes some of the protein become indigestible. Unfortunately, tests for crude protein cannot distinguish between regular crude protein and this heat-damaged protein. As a result, your forage test can mislead you into thinking you have more usable protein in your forage than actually is there

If your forage test is done using NIR, heat-damaged protein may be one of the analyses reported. If the heat-damaged protein is high enough, the test also will report an adjusted crude protein that is different from the regular crude protein. However, the NIR test for heat-damage may not be accurate enough for you if your ration contains a lot of this forage and has little or no extra protein in it for your cattle.

What you need to do when heat-damaged protein is suspected is request from your lab a chemical analysis for heat-damaged protein. Then use this test to correctly adjust the amount of crude protein your forage actually will provide to your animals.

Forage tests can tell us a lot about the nutrient supplying ability of our forages. But we need to make sure we conduct the right tests and then use the results wisely. (SOURCE: Bruce Anderson, University of Nebraska)



WORLD POPULATION HITS SEVEN BILLION

With world population skyrocketing, the environmental movement is beginning to see the wisdom of high-yield agriculture

Last week, the world's population hit another milestone – 7 billion people. The United Nations (UN) projects that the world population will reach 8 billion by 2025, and 10 billion by 2083. What's more, life expectancy in the world has risen from 48 years in 1950 to 69 years today, the UN says.

While China remains the world's most populous country at 1.34 billion people, India has closed the gap (1.2 billion) and is expected to

gain the top ranking by 2030, thanks to its higher birth rate and three decades of strict family-planning rules in China. In fact, China's population is projected to begin shrinking in 2027, and could be smaller than it is today by 2050, some demographers predict.

The U.S. is the world's third-most populous country, but a very distant third. The U.S. has one of the highest growth rates among the industrialized nations, but it is growing due to immigration.

The real engine of world population growth is in Africa, which features both the world's highest birthrates and the deepest poverty; that continent will be a huge contributor to a world population that experts say will hit 12 billion by 2050. In fact, the UN Population Fund reports that in Burundi, Uganda and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the regional population of nearly 900 million could reach 2 billion in 40 years, accounting for half the projected global population growth over that span. Most of that growth is expected to come in Africa's cities, the Associated Press reports.

All this means that in less than 40 years, the world will have to increase food production by 40%. That means producing more food on the same amount of land, and with less water. It also means using the grazing lands of the world to convert sunlight into protein, which will fall solely on ruminant livestock production.

This kind of production growth not only demands the increased use of [technology in agriculture](#), but also has caused a new realization within the environmental movement. That movement is starting to grasp that the use of these technologies is no longer considered a threat but a vital component in ensuring that open spaces and the environment are maintained.

Modern agriculture has been vilified by many on the left, which has spawned and helped fuel the growth of the natural, organic and local food movements. But those technologies aren't as efficient and people are increasingly accepting the notion that the best tool to feed the world in a sustainable way that protects the environment and feeds the world economically and efficiently is high-yield conventional agriculture.

Those who once saw us as the problem are now increasingly seeing modern agriculture as the solution. (SOURCE: Troy Marshall, BEEF Contributing Editor, Oct. 21, 2011)



FARMER USE OF BROADBAND INTERNET

Those of you who receive the Cow Country News probably recently saw a survey about producers' use of the internet. We have been exploring the value of access and adoption of broadband internet for farmers.

Significant investment has been made in broadband, particularly in Kentucky, because of the anticipated payoffs in either additional income or new jobs. The purpose of our study was to estimate the value producers place on this communication tool and determine how they use the internet in their day-to-day operations. While we are still receiving surveys (thank you!), we wanted to provide an overview of the results that have been received thus far.

The table on the following page provides an overview of the average respondent. The average farmer is 59 years old (our age range spanned 18 to 93) and farms 365 acres of land. Only 39% reported that they were full-time farmers. While most respondents own cattle operations, there were significant grain and fruit and vegetable operations represented as well.

In terms of internet usage, 69% of respondents answered that they use the internet; 62% of respondents currently use broadband. Of those that do not currently have broadband, the question was asked, "Would you be willing to pay up to \$300 in additional taxes for access to broadband?" Over half of those who did not have access to broadband suggested they were willing to pay to get access to broadband. Some even mentioned their willingness to pay even if they currently subscribed to satellite internet.

Responses suggested that the internet is used primarily for accessing weather, email, market reports, purchasing inputs, and accessing extension publications. The reasons farmers suggested they didn't have high speed internet included (in descending order): no access, not needed, cost, and lack of perceived usefulness.

The clear question remains as to whether having access to high speed internet has influenced farmer income, but we were pleasantly surprised by the current level of use and the different applications. Kentucky is ahead of the curve when it comes to broadband access and adoption and hopefully our results will soon show that this is an important component of farm income growth and employment. (SOURCE: Alison Davis and Chris Jeffcoat, UK Economic & Policy Update, Vol. 11, No. 10, Oct. 27, 2011)



HIGH CATTLE PRICES TO CONTINUE, ANALYSTS SAY

With a shrinking feeder cattle supply, a lower U.S. per-capita beef supply and escalating foreign demand for American cuts, cattle prices are "going to get higher," says Randy Blach, executive vice president of CattleFax.

It was the message cattle feeders and producers wanted to hear at the recent [Texas Cattle Feeders Association](#) (TCFA) convention in Amarillo. But Blach also issued a warning – "there will be some incredible volatility," requiring careful price risk management in a boom era the industry has rarely, if ever seen.

"Along with high fed-cattle prices, we're also seeing the highest breakevens ever, a lot at \$1.20/lb. or above," Blach says. "If you aren't managing this risk, it won't be pretty (if the market takes a turn you don't expect)."

TCFA represents nearly 200 Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico member feedyards, which finish some 30% of the nation's fed cattle. They depend heavily on calves and yearlings from regional ranchers to keep their pens full. However, Blach says fallout from the worst drought in history will continue to keep pressure on feeder-cattle supplies.

On Jan. 1 this year, USDA reported a Texas beef-cow inventory of about 5 million head. After the drought and large herd liquidation, that number will drop to 4.5 million to 4.6 million the beginning of 2012, Blach says. Cow numbers should stabilize more heading into 2013.

"Nearly all the U.S. decline in cow numbers is from Texas and Oklahoma," Blach adds. However, northern states are seeing an increase in cow numbers in areas where sufficient moisture has kept pastures green.

Still, since Texas and Oklahoma have about 23% of the nation's beef cows and produce 22% of the feeder cattle and calves, feedyards should expect tight supplies and high-feeder cattle prices, he says. He projects 550-lb. calf prices to climb to \$1.75-\$2/lb. in 2012.

"It should be a good run for cow-calf producers – if you have the pasture," he says.

Blach says a key market indicator, per-capita net beef supply, shows a lower supply through 2013. CattleFax projects a 2012 per-capita supply of 56.3 lbs., down from 57.4 lbs. this year. It forecasts only a 53.7-lb. per-capita net beef supply for 2012.

At the same time, [U.S. beef exports](#) will likely reach 3 billion lbs. this year, up 24-25%, while imports are down 14-15%. The world population is expected to increase by 700 million people over the next 10 years, with the world population forecasted to hit 9 billion in just a few decades.

"We think exports will continue to grow," Blach says, adding that export growth has created another \$210/head in added value for producers and feeders.

On the grain side, Blach says the tightening of the "corn-wheat price spread" could create additional wheat feeding. He says CattleFax is projecting the first half of 2012 corn prices in the \$5.50-\$6.50/bu. range. (SOURCE: Larry Stalcup, BEEF Contributing Editor, Nov 11, 2011)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- JAN 9-11 American Forage & Grassland Council Annual Conference, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Louisville
- JAN 13 Forages at KCA, Lexington
- JAN 25-26 Heart of America Grazing Conference, Mt. Vernon, IL
- FEB 23 32nd Kentucky Alfalfa Conference, Cave City Convention Center, Cave City



Garry D. Lacefield

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Extension Forage Specialist
December 2011

We wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year